



The Methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamā`ah ¹

Imām Tājuddīn al-Subkī

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Know, that *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamā`ah* are all in agreement upon one Creed regarding what is obligatory, permissible, and impossible (for Allāh), even if they differed regarding the methods and fundamentals that arrive to that.

In general, they [*Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamā`ah*] are three groups, as ascertained by copious study of all of the sources (*istiqrā`*):

1. The people of Hadīth. Their basic fundamentals are the revealed proofs (*adillah al-sam'iyah*), by that I mean the Book, the *Sunnah*, and the *Ijma`* (consensus).

2. The people of rational investigation and thought. They are the Ash`arīs and the Hanafīs <sup>2</sup> [the Māturīdīs]. The Shaykh of the Ash`arīs is: Abū Hasan al-Ash`arī. The Shaykh of the Hanafīs is Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī. They are in agreement regarding the fundamentals of the *sam'iyāt* (revealed knowledge) that the intellect can only deem as rationally possible, as well as the areas wherein the two (rational and revealed knowledge) are combined. They are in agreement in all areas of creed except in the issue of *takwīn* ³ and the issue of *taqlīd* [in *`aqīdah*].

3. The people of ecstatic experience (*wajd*) and unveiling, and they are the Sūfīs. Their fundamentals are the fundamentals of the people of rational investigation and Hadīth in the beginning, and that of unveiling and inspiration (*ilham*) in the end.

¹ Excerpted from Imām Tājuddīn al-Subkī's explanation of the creed of Ibn Hajīb.

² In *Mu`id al-Ni'am wa-Mubid al-Niqām* Imām Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī says:

And these Hanafīs, Shāfi'īs, Mālikīs, and virtuous Hanbalīs,- Allah be praised - are one hand in matters of creed, none (of them) departing from that save the lowly ones from the Hanafīs and Shāfi'īs that joined ranks with the people of *'Iṣṣāḥ*, and the lowly ones of the Hanbalīs that joined ranks with the people of *Tajsim*. And Allah has spared the Mālikīs for we have not seen any Mālikī except that he was an Ash`arī in creed...

³ *Takwīn*: lit; Creation. This refers to the difference between the Ash`arīs and Māturīdīs concerning Allah's creation. **1)** *takwīn* according to the Ash`arīs is an Attribute of action, is not eternal and enters into existence **2)** *takwīn* according to the Māturīdīs is from the Attributes of eternity.

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